MODULE 7: TOOLS FOR MANAGERS

Managers of programs providing mental health services are called upon to make difficult decisions daily. However, when a terrorist event occurs, the types of decisions they must make change in relation to the specifics of the event. Who will they send to respond, and how will services be delivered? Where will staff go and to whom will they report once they get there? Often, these decisions must be made quickly and with little information. And, as new information becomes available, these decisions are reevaluated and adjusted, as necessary. The key to being a successful manager during an act of terrorism is maintaining flexibility and creating a supportive work environment.

Most of the information in this module provides guidance on how managers can prepare themselves and their staff before a terrorist event. The last section focuses on the managerial role during the immediate and early aftermath of a terrorist event.

After completing this module, a manager will be better able to:

- Identify necessary steps for staff planning and preparation

- Assess the strengths and limitations of staff and new hires

- Prepare staff to respond to a terrorist event

- Manage logistics and resources

- Provide a supportive work environment for staff

- Identify their role in managing the provision of mental health services following an act of terrorism

Establishing Consistent Management Practices and Protocols

Managers may already employ many of the following practices in their immediate workplace environment. If they belong to a larger organization, they might consider the management practices listed below from a broader perspective.

- **Establish a clear chain of command.** Do staff members at every level know to whom they report and who reports to them? Even more importantly, would staff know whom to contact if the manager was not accessible or available? When terrorism hits, a clear chain of command means knowing who to go to for answers and assignments. Call trees, organizational charts, and cluster meetings are all visible ways to promote and reinforce the chain of command.

- **Provide regular supervision and feedback.** Managers understand the importance of regular supervision and feedback. However, during times of crisis, the value of periodic "check ins" with staff is increased as staff experience prolonged periods of stressful work

conditions. Prior to a crisis, develop a system for evaluating the abilities and contributions of staff, recognizing their achievements, and providing them with constructive criticism. In addition to regular debriefings and other meetings, work with staff to identify how they would like to receive feedback and with what frequency. Keep in mind that it may be necessary to adjust this plan to increase the level of supervision, depending on the nature and severity of the crisis.

- **Nurture relationships with gatekeepers.** Foster relationships with other mental health teams in the area, as well as with local, state, and national response agencies, from the perspective of a response to terrorism. Make sure these agencies are familiar with the staff's capabilities, the services available, and other resources that may be useful during a response effort. Not only will this help to position the organization as a reliable and willing partner, it may help to provide the manager with a place at the decision-making table during pre-event planning sessions, as well as with increased access to information during the immediate aftermath of a terrorist event. Gatekeepers of particular importance include city and county officials, and counterparts in other human services organizations.

Assessing Staff's Strengths and Limitations

While there is no formula for the perfect disaster mental health worker, there are traits that make some people better suited for disaster mental health work than others, and the importance of these attributes is amplified in a disaster setting. It is also important to recognize that even the very best mental health worker may not be equipped or may prefer not to be exposed to a site involving mass casualties. Therefore, it is advisable to assess staff's strengths and limitations prior to an event, if possible, and to identify in advance those who are both willing and able to provide services at a disaster site.

> *Crisis counseling services surged in response to each new terrorist related incident…The greatest strength of our staff was their ability to develop a style of operating that was flexible and responsive to daily events.*
>
> Diana Nordboe, M.Ed.
> Regional Coordinator
> Community Resilience Project

Because of the intense chaos that is the very essence of a disaster site, the "ideal" disaster mental health worker should, at the very least, possess calmness under pressure, community "connections," and the ability to work with some degree of independence. The following chart of attributes may be used to help guide decisions regarding how to staff an emergency management team, as well as to assist in making hiring decisions.

Table 7−1. Staff Attributes[41]

Attribute	Look for . . .	Watch out for . . .
Quick-thinking initiative	- Natural curiosity - Learning gleaned from experience - Creative solutions to complex problems - Flexibility - Organization in the midst of chaos	- Thrill seekers and "adrenaline junkies" - Extreme risk-takers and those who engage in dangerous behaviors - People who depend on routine and stability
Sociability with clear personal boundaries	- Finding the silver lining—making the best of difficult situations and seeking the best in others - Team player - Approachability - Friendliness - Genuineness - Tact - Discretion	- Over-involvement with survivors - Insincerity or artificiality
Clear professional boundaries	- Familiarity with incident command issues - Recognition and respect of operations at local, state, and national levels - Impartiality	- Overconcern with turf issues - Instigators of organizational struggles
Natural counseling skills	- Empathy—ability to make survivors feel they are understood - Supportive and active listening skills—asking the right questions, validating survivors' answers and feelings, and helping ease confusion and worry - Respect—positive and appropriate attention paid to survivors	- Inability to accurately summarize and reflect others' feelings - Rigidity and formality - Disrespectful tone and body language - Tardiness

In addition, mental health *para*professionals may be recruited from existing community programs such as crime victim advocacy and services programs, senior outreach services, religious-sponsored programs, cultural group-oriented service programs, or disaster response volunteer organizations. These workers often reflect the demographic characteristics, as well as the ethnic and cultural groups present in the disaster-affected community. Solid interpersonal communications skills, the ability to work cooperatively with others, the capacity to help others without judging, and the ability to maintain confidentiality are desired qualities for paraprofessional staff.

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[41] Young, B.H., Ford, J.D., Ruzek, J.I., Friedman, M.J., & Gusman, F.D. (1998). <u>Disaster mental health services: A guidebook for clinicians and administrators</u>. Menlo Park, CA: National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Available at: http://www.ncptsd.org/publications/disaster/index.html.

As managers take stock of their staff's particular strengths and limitations, it is recommended that they also assess which staff members have specialized skills that might be particularly useful during a crisis. Consider the questions below.

- Do some staff members have experience responding to acts of terrorism or mass trauma, and would staff with less experience benefit by partnering with them?

- Are there other staff members who would be particularly good mentors to younger or less experienced staff?

- Which staff members have specialized skills—such as language capabilities or strong community associations—that might increase access to the populations being served?

- What other types of specialized skills or attributes might influence emergency management plans?

Preparing Staff for a Crisis

To identify training needs, managers may consider simply asking their staff members if there are additional skills or topic areas in which they would like to receive training to better equip them to provide mental health services after an act of terrorism. This will also help assess their individual levels of confidence and readiness to respond. (Note that the training needs of paraprofessional staff may be different from those of mental health professional staff. Paraprofessionals should be referred to Module 8 for guidance.)

Disasters are highly stressful events for both the victim and the disaster worker. In my experience, terrorism has been the most difficult type of disaster to respond to and has a stronger emotional impact on workers than natural disasters. Training is needed before an event to prepare crisis counselors to deal with what they may hear, see, and experience after a terrorist incident. Many of us were better at helping others than taking care of ourselves. In-service trainings and weekly meetings should reinforce the importance of self-care.

Diana Nordboe, M.Ed.
Regional Coordinator
Community Resilience Project

While managers may know which staff members were hired as essential personnel, it is important to ensure that all staff members are familiar with this designation, understand who possesses it, and know what it means. The qualifying characteristics of essential personnel include:

- Willingness to serve as essential personnel

- Availability on short-term notice for disaster assignments

- Demonstrated tolerance for long hours, substandard facilities, turbulent environments, and organizational struggles

- Understanding of the risks associated with responding to terrorist events

- Ability to make arrangements for current clients to receive care in their absence

Essential personnel, in particular, need to understand what will be expected of them and to be prepared to fulfill their responsibilities. It is important that managers remind all personnel, and especially essential personnel, that having a family preparedness plan, including provisions for childcare and communication with their families during a crisis, is critical to their ability to comply with their job descriptions.

Another area that might require additional staff training is in complying with the regulations mandated by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996. One part of the law is intended to reduce the burden of health care administration by standardizing administrative processes and making them electronic. If staff have questions regarding HIPAA compliance or need further training on the subject, this information can be found in fact sheets and appropriate training resources on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' HIPAA Web site: http://www.cms.gov/hipaa/.

Managing Logistics and Resources

Unclear directions and inadequate resources add to the confusion and stress of responding to a terrorist event. Managers can help reduce or avoid this by establishing clear logistical plans and protocols that guide their staff members through the steps of what to do.

Call-up lists, for example, are useful in transmitting information to a large number of people through a network of supervisors. If these lists are rehearsed frequently, mental health workers will know who their guidance will come from during a crisis and where to report if they are deployed.

It is important that procedures be established in advance for how teams of mental health workers will consistently identify and introduce themselves to prevent confusion. Tactics for distinguishing themselves from other volunteers on-scene might include:

- Wearing matching T-shirts

- Carrying badges with photo identification and official insignia

- Identifying themselves with vocational phrases such as "outreach workers"

- Carrying letters of introduction on official letterhead

In addition to materials for gaining access to a site, staff need appropriate resources to manage crisis situations, such as cell phones or text messaging equipment. Backup communication systems are an important element to ensure that a technical breakdown in communication does not disrupt response efforts. Consider the suggestions below.

- Use disks rather than the hard drives on staff computers (if hard drives are used, they should be backed up regularly to an off-site location such as the city government, another CSB office, or other partner organization).

- Use palm pilots and other personal digital assistants (PDAs).

- Have cell phones with text messaging capability for workers in the field.

- Store emergency phone lists and other documents in multiple locations.

- Develop innovative planning solutions, such as employing the communication channels in school buses. (Two-way radios in school buses may work even if phone systems malfunction during a disaster. In the event of a communications breakdown and cellular connections being overwhelmed, one Northern Virginia county had plans to deploy school buses to specific locations. Staff knew to go to these locations, where they could wait for and receive information.)

Creating a Supportive Work Environment

Successful mental health response depends on workers who are committed to taking care of survivors—and themselves. Managers can take the lead by creating an atmosphere of team empowerment and creativity, by being accessible and approachable, and by establishing open lines of communication with staff members.

Ways to foster a supportive work environment include:

- Creating structure through regular meetings, established due dates/expectations for paperwork, and a staff review schedule

- Organizing team- and skills-building activities

- Displaying openness to new ideas

- Establishing policies and procedures for setting limits for staff

- Encouraging staff to take care of personal family issues

Staff attrition has been low despite the stressful nature of the work and the length of the project. The crisis counseling and outreach staff are deeply committed to helping victims and the community recover from 9-11. Team spirit is a major strength of the project that sustained staff during the most challenging times. This has been both a rewarding and heart-breaking experience that has given each of us the opportunity to grow both professionally and personally. I consider it a privilege to have worked with such dedicated and caring people.

Diana Nordboe, M.Ed.
Regional Coordinator
Community Resilience Project

On Fridays, program meetings were spent touching base with each other, finding out where people were, sharing stories, and giving the opportunity to ventilate and process. I also think it was productive for staff to share their plans for the weekends. Part of my job as a manager, although I didn't do a very good job taking care of myself and I acknowledge that, was to make sure that my staff was taking good care of themselves. I think the more the project managers got to know each other and became our own working team, we were then able to serve that function for each other—being able to process and check in with each other and see how we're doing, or have someone tell you that 'you really need to take Friday afternoon off, you sound tired.' It has to be an effort of concern and caring and teamwork to ensure both the workers and the managers each are engaging in good self-care.

Ruby E. Brown, Ph.D.
Project Director, Arlington
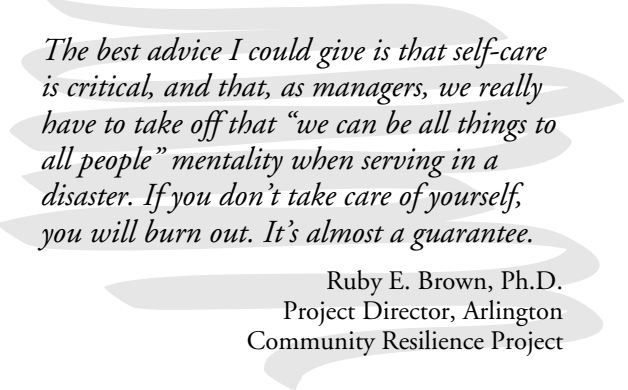Community Resilience Project

In addition, managers of programs that provide mental health services to clients on a regular basis, whether on an outpatient or inpatient level, will need to decide which staff to send into the field and which staff to retain to provide continuity of care to existing patients. Managers need to consider the following guidelines when managing onsite staff who will also likely be required to work extended periods of time during a crisis:

- Rotate staff members between high- and low-stress areas

- Provide breaks

- Offer a refresher area with food and water

- Monitor staff's ability to function

- Encourage continual self-assessment using personal evaluation tools like the one offered in Module 6

- Recognize that it may be difficult for staff members who have been "left behind" while others go out into the community to help

- Ensure that formal or informal debriefing services are available to all staff and know when to call on outsiders for debriefing

During a crisis, administrative staff also may be called upon to adopt roles that are outside their normal range of experience. Identify possible roles that administrative staff might play in advance and cross-train them in these areas. In addition, encourage administrative staff to review Module 8, which provides information for paraprofessionals.

Self-Care for Managers

Self-care is often difficult for managers. They are typically very good at taking care of others and at reminding others to take the time for self-care. But, with so many people depending on them during a crisis, it is often hard to take the time needed to prevent their own burn out. Module 6 identifies the best strategies for self-care during a crisis.

The best advice I could give is that self-care is critical, and that, as managers, we really have to take off that "we can be all things to all people" mentality when serving in a disaster. If you don't take care of yourself, you will burn out. It's almost a guarantee.

Ruby E. Brown, Ph.D.
Project Director, Arlington
Community Resilience Project

Managing the Immediate and Early Aftermath of a Terrorist Event

The table below provides a general description of some of the roles and responsibilities a manager typically assumes during the immediate and early aftermath of an event.

Table 7–2: Managerial Roles in the Immediate and Early Aftermath of a Terrorist Event[42]

Objective	Task
Coordinate response with other agencies.	• Convene with other mental health program managers, local and state response administrators, and national coordinators. • Determine an overall response strategy and the organization's role in it.
Gather information about the event and conduct a needs assessment.	• Determine the impact on survivors (e.g., number of fatalities, injured, homes and schools destroyed). • Determine the impact on high-risk groups (e.g., injured, relocated families, elderly, first responders). • Determine specialized skills requirements (e.g., language, children).
Allocate staff resources and coordinate mental health response.	• Assess staff members' strengths, limitations, and levels of training. Assess specialized skills. • Dispatch appropriate team members to the terrorist site. • Establish crisis lines or other systems to respond to requests for services and information.
Coordinate communication of information to the media and the public.	• Mobilize appropriate communication officers. • Activate emergency risk communication plan.
Coordinate with other response agencies to provide mental health services to first responders and monitor staff members.	• Provide debriefing and crisis intervention services. • Provide education services. • Monitor staff members for stress and vicarious traumatization.
Coordinate documentation of services.	• Conduct a response evaluation. • Document challenges and lessons learned in after-action reports. • Set up archives.

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[42] Young, B.H., Ford, J.D., Ruzek, J.I., Friedman, M.J., & Gusman, F.D. (1998). <u>Disaster mental health services: A guidebook for clinicians and administrators</u>. Menlo Park, CA: National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Summary

This module provides managers of mental health staff and services with guidance on how to better equip themselves and their staff to provide services during the aftermath of a terrorist event. It suggests management practices and protocols to help facilitate a clear chain of command and open lines of communication among staff. It guides the manager through an assessment of staff's strengths and limitations to help identify and hire new employees, and to develop appropriate staffing plans during a crisis. It also identifies several other key areas to consider prior to an event, such as the importance of staff training, logistics, resource planning, and self-care, and it concludes with a general description of the roles and responsibilities that a manager typically assumes during the immediate and early aftermath of a terrorist event.

Additional Resources

DeWolfe, D.J. (Draft, April 2002). <u>Mental health interventions following major disasters: A guide for administrators, policymakers, planners and providers</u>. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Young, B.H., Ford, J.D., Ruzek, J.I., Friedman, M.J., & Gusman, F.D. (1998). <u>Disaster mental health services: A guidebook for clinicians and administrators</u>. Menlo Park, CA: National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, http://www.ncptsd.org/publications/disaster/index.html.